



Volume 31

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of Australia**



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Front cover: Photo of the Alexander tetradrachm, no. 68 (see article of Lloyd Taylor Fig 1 page 52)



# NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA INC

## President's Report

With COVID-19 now endemic, the Association has not been able to hold a conference because of the upsurge this year of the virus Australia-wide, but nevertheless the NAA has continued to function with an upgraded website and the publication of this double volume JNAA31, which is available for free download at the NAA website. We plan to hold a conference next year in Adelaide, 19 – 20<sup>th</sup> October 2023, hosted by the Numismatic Society of South Australia.

I am delighted to announce the award of the Ray Jewell Silver Medal to our Managing Editor, Associate Professor Gillan Davis for his services to the NAA, and his numismatic work both in Australia and overseas for which he has an international reputation. Congratulations Gil from all of us.

The NAA continues to enjoy sponsorship at a sustainable level, with Noble Numismatics (Gold), Coinworks, Downies (Silver), Coins & Collectables Victoria, Drake Sterling, Mowbray Collectables, Sterling & Currency and Vintage Coins & Banknotes (Bronze) all contributing to ensure the Association's continued success. Membership is being maintained, and with the contributions by sponsors and members, the Association can function in these difficult times.

The NAA now has a new Secretary, Bridget McClean, and a new address in Nunawading, Victoria. This is convenient as the NAA is incorporated in Victoria. Much time has been spent changing bank signatories and updating Consumer Affairs Victoria; nothing happens quickly these days!

The Numismatic Association of Australia now has a functioning PayPal account linked to [president@numismatics.org.au](mailto:president@numismatics.org.au). This is very convenient for payments coming from overseas and avoids most international bank fees. Like with banking, setting up a PayPal account is not a five-minute exercise, but well worthwhile.

I am impressed with the considerable work our Managing Editor Gil Davis has put into this volume notwithstanding his being extraordinarily busy transferring between universities and setting up new programmes at the Australian Catholic University. Also, I am grateful to Barrie Newman for his on-going work in getting the journal set up and printed, taking on the tasks of both layout and copy editor.

Council continues to meet by ZOOM, hosted by David Galt at Mowbray Collectables.

Finally, the Association cannot function without the dedication of its secretary and its treasurer (Lyn Bloom); thank you both Bridget and Lyn.

Professor Walter R. Bloom

President, NAA

[www.numismatics.org.au](http://www.numismatics.org.au)

3<sup>rd</sup> August 2022

# Editor's note

This volume has been a long time in the making. Usually, an issue is based around the NAA annual conference, but COVID-19 made that impossible. More importantly, as the peak body for numismatics in the country, we are focussed on making each volume wide ranging, interesting and impactful. So, we waited on the completion of a couple of key contributions and have brought out a combined two-year issue which I have dubbed 'the professors' volume' on account of the academic attainment of most of the authors. I trust you will agree that the results justify the decision, because here we offer a splendid collection of eleven articles on an eclectic range of topics with some of the best numismatic analysis and writing I have read. Personally, I have learnt a lot, and I expect that you will too. The collection is rounded out by an obituary by NAA stalwart Peter Lane of the late Maurice B Keain, a real character on the Australian scene.

There are two articles on Australian topics. Vincent Verheyen offers a forensic scrutiny of 'proofs' and 'specimens' from the Melbourne and Perth mints issued in just two years, 1955 and 1956 and seeks to differentiate between them. Walter Bloom provides an interesting study of Western Australian numismatic medallions and badges with an emphasis on the Castellorizian Brotherhood which represented the émigrés from that Greek island.

Lloyd Taylor gives us a Hellenistic trilogy which is a tour de force in numismatic analysis. He starts with a brief but compelling argument correcting one of Hersh's additions to Price's Alexander typology showing that it was already in the corpus. Next, he reattributes Macedonian imperial coinage attributed to Berytos to Byblos. Finally, he shows that an issue of tetradrachms struck in the name of Philip III was in fact a posthumous issue of Seleukos.

There are four articles on a Roman theme:

- Bruce Marshall moves us into the turbulent period of the late Roman Republic with a study of 'labels' on a small number of denarii which he contends fed into the contemporary political discourse.
- Graeme Stephens and John McDonald offer us something unusual and valuable. They document and analyse an unpublished hoard of fourth and fifth centuries AD Roman coins and local imitations from Sri Lanka.
- Andrew Chugg explores the veracity of commemorative medallions of Antinous, paramour of the emperor Hadrian who was deified after his death in the Nile, arguing that there are ways of distinguishing between genuine and fake examples.
- John Melville-Jones offers us a magnificent work listing the names of Roman coins as used by the Romans themselves and sometimes just by modern numismatists.

Written in John's inimitable style, this is an invaluable reference for collectors, students and scholars.

The next article by Emy Kim and Cristiana Zaccagnino takes us into the fascinating world of a numismatic collection of some 600 Greek and Roman coins housed at Queen's University in Canada that is being used in teaching and research. They show just how valuable coins can be when treated as artefacts used to inform historical and scientific understanding. This represents a welcome trend in modern scholarship to integrate numismatics into cross-disciplinary studies.

Finally, we publish a long autobiographical article by Maria Caltabiano. This is justified by the profound impact which she has made on numismatics in a lifetime as professor of numismatics at the University of Messina in Sicily. Along the way, she describes many of her projects with a particularly fascinating exposition of an example of iconic programmatic minting in late fifth century BC Kamarina in the period of the 'signing masters' – some of the most exquisite ancient coinage ever struck. Sadly, we tend not to know enough about numismatics in early Europe, and this article goes some way towards filling the gap.

I sincerely thank the many diligent anonymous reviewers who have done so much to improve the papers. Likewise, I thank the members of the editorial board who stand ready and willing to help when called upon, and John Melville-Jones who happily proofreads the articles. Above all, I pay tribute to Barrie Newman without whose tireless efforts across the years, these volumes would not see the light of day.

Associate Professor Gil Davis  
Managing Editor

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*Articles must comprise original research on numismatic material including but not limited to Australasian numismatics (coins, tokens, medals, banknotes) or ancient or mediaeval numismatics. Manuscripts can be emailed to any member of the Editorial Board in your area of research, along with a copy to the Managing Editor.*

# The enigmatic Philip III issue of Seleukeia on Tigris

Lloyd W. H. Taylor

## Abstract

*This study establishes that the die linked tetradrachm issues of SC 118 in the name of Philip III and SC 117.7 in the name of Seleukos were struck simultaneously at Seleukeia on Tigris. The issue in the name of Philip III was struck from purpose cut dies, an intentional posthumous issue, obverse die linked to a simultaneous issue in the name of Seleukos. A parallel emission of die linked tetradrachms in the names of Philip and Seleukos also occurred at Uncertain Mint 6A (Opis) in Babylonia, a short distance from Seleukeia on Tigris. This is a chronological peg that associates the issues from the two mints. It suggests that the emission from Seleukeia on Tigris accompanied the acclamation of the Seleukos as king, coincident with the inauguration of the mint at his new foundation in c. 304/3 BC.<sup>1</sup>*

## Keywords

[Seleukeia on Tigris] [Philip III] [Seleukos I] [Die study]

## Introduction

This study examines the tetradrachm issue in the name of Philip III (SC 118; Price P229) attributed to Seleukeia on Tigris, plus the obverse die linked issue struck in the name of Seleukos (SC 117.7b; WSM 780).<sup>2</sup> The two types have a long history of study, including varying attributions.<sup>3</sup> Yet, as detailed in *Seleucid Coins*, the die link poses a number of interpretive problems and uncertainties that have not been resolved satisfactorily.<sup>4</sup> The latter publication even questioned the attribution and suggested that the Philip III issue was most plausibly ‘a lifetime issue of Philip III - one of whose obverse dies was rehabilitated under Seleucus I by a mint of limited resources (possibly but not necessarily Carrhae), just as old reverse dies of Philip were pressed into service at Uncertain Mint 6A and the “native/satrapal” workshop of Babylon.’ It noted that ‘there was no obvious reason why a die should have been brought out of retirement for use

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1 Split year dates are referenced to the Macedonian lunar calendar year, which commenced in the Autumn (September/October) of our Gregorian solar calendar year.

2 The die link was first identified by K. Dimitrov (1986).

3 Price (1991): 500 attributed type P229 (SC 118) to an Uncertain Eastern Mint, while Newell (1941): 45 attributed WSM 780 (SC 117.7b) and WSM 781 (the drachm equivalent of SC 117.7a) to Carrhae. Houghton and Lorber (2002): 53-54 summarise the history of reattribution of SC 118 and die linked SC 117.7b to Seleukeia on Tigris.

4 Houghton and Lorber (2002): 53-54.

at Seleucia, which was well supplied with dies.<sup>5</sup> The underlying premise of the analysis presented in *Seleucid Coins* was that SC 118 was a lifetime issue from the era of Philip III, an obverse die of which was rehabilitated two decades later to strike tetradrachms bearing the name of Seleukos. Using all known examples of SC 118 and SC 117.7, this study examines the detail of the die link, and the chronological implications it holds for the start of mint operations at Seleukeia on Tigris. It establishes that the underlying premise of *Seleucid Coins* regarding the origin of SC 118 is incorrect.

## Catalogue

With the exception of coin numbers 17 and 21, the coins in the following catalogue are illustrated on the Plates 1-2. Coins 17 and 21 can be viewed at the publications noted with these entries.

**SC 118** (Price P229)

Obverse: Head of Herakles r. wearing lion skin headdress; dotted border.

Reverse: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ below, ΦΙΛΙΠΠΟΥ to r., Zeus Aëtophoros seated l., pentagram in l. field; dotted border.

	<b>Obv.</b>	<b>Rev.</b>	<b>gms</b>	<b>Provenance</b>
1.	A1	P1	17.16	CNG 76 (2007), 769; Arthur Houghton Coll.
2.	A1	P2	17.01	London, BM 2002,0101.986; Hersh Coll.
3.	A1	P3	n.r.	AHNS <sup>6</sup> 1045; Commerce ('Seleucus I') Hoard, 2005 (CH 10.265).
4.	A1	P4	16.52	London, BM 1911,0704.120; Price (1991): pl. CXX, P229.
5.	A1	P5	16.91	Heritage 232015 (2020), 62034.
6.	A2	P6	16.93	Naville Numismatics 54 (2019), 126. A fine die break extends from Herakles lower jaw across frontal neck, and two die breaks extend radially from the forehead.
7.	A2	P6	n.r.	AHNS 1046; Commerce ('Seleucus I') Hoard, 2005 (CH 10.265). Die break extends from lionskin paw to the dotted border.

5 Houghton and Lorber (2002): 54.

6 AHNS = Arthur Houghton New Series.

8. A2 P6 16.96 CNG web shop inventory no. 519078; CSE II 57; AHNS 1044; Commerce (“Seleucus I”) Hoard, 2005 (CH 10.265).  
New die break beneath lower jaw of lionskin, extending to first tuft of the mane. Another vertical break appears on the right field beneath the nose, in front of the lips.
9. A2 P7 16.92 New York, ANS 1944.100.45163; Thompson (1986): 70, no. 160 and pl. 11, 160; Armenak 1927 Hoard (IGCH 1423). Prior to this coin strike the A2 die surface was retouched to remove die breaks before forehead and mouth, and those on the chin and neck. Resurfacing of the fields results in removal of the turned-up tips of the tufts of hair on the trailing edge of the mane on the lionskin.  
P7 no footstool beneath the feet of Zeus.
10. A2 P8 17.10 Eukratides Numismatics inventory no. br149.  
The advance of die breaks on A2 indicates that reverse dies P7 and P8 were used alternately, rather than sequentially, in striking of nos. 9-12.
11. A2 P7 16.98 CNG eAuction 399 (2017), 225. Die break from upper lip to tip of nose starts to develop.
12. A2 P8 17.16 Brisbane, LWHT Coll. no. 204; Stack’s Bowers NYINC (2012), 166; Gemini II (2006), 63; AHNS 744. A prominent linear die break extends from upper lip to beyond the tip of the nose.
13. A2 P9 n.r. AHNS 665; Houghton and Lorber (2002): pl. 7, 118. A new die break appears before the chin.
14. A2 P10 16.96 Elsen 119 (2013), 110. Prior to this coin strike the A2 die surface was retouched for the second time to reduce the prominent die break extending from upper lip to beyond tip of nose.
15. A2 P11 16.85 Tauler & Fau E-Auction 55 (2020), 5013; Tauler & Fau E-Auction 49 (2020), 2008. Numerous die breaks in front of the face and on the neck.
16. A2 P12 n.r. AHNS 1042; Commerce (“Seleucus I”) Hoard, 2005 (CH 10.265). Numerous die breaks in front of the face and on the neck. A2 in most advanced state of wear.

17. A2 P13 16.38 Amandry and Callot (1988): 67, no. 16, pl. XIII, 16; Failaka 1984 Hoard, *CH* 8.256. Low resolution image - advanced dies break visible on neck place this as a late strike.

Additional examples of SC 118 for which no study image was available: *SNG Copenhagen* 1085 (struck from die A2) and another specimen recorded by Hersh (1998): 39 in the Phoenicia 1997 hoard.

**SC 117.7a** (Tetradrachm equivalent of the drachm *WSM* 781)

Obverse: Head of Herakles r. wearing lion skin headdress; dotted border.

Reverse: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ below, ΣΕΛΕΥΚΟΥ to r., Zeus Aëtophoros seated l.,  beneath throne,  in l. field; dotted border.

18. A2 P14 n.r. *AHNS* 545; SC 117.7a (this coin).  
A2 unworn, in earliest state.
19. A2 P15 16.79 Savoca Numismatik, 22nd Silver Auction (2018), 269.  
A2 unworn, in earliest state. P14- P15 the horizontal strut of the throne is positioned immediately beneath the throne seat in order to make room for the  mint mark

**SC 117.7b** (*WSM* 780)

Obverse: Head of Herakles r. wearing lion skin headdress; dotted border.

Reverse: ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ below, ΣΕΛΕΥΚΟΥ to r., Zeus Aëtophoros seated l., PA beneath throne,  in l. field; dotted border.

20. A2 P16 n.r. *CSE* II, Ad7: Hoover (unpublished) pl. 1, Ad7; *AHNS* 546.  
A2 in moderately worn state following second retouching of the die. P16 depicts the feet of Zeus resting on an exergual or ground line, rather than a footstool. The horizontal strut of the throne is absent.
21. A2 P16 n.r. *WSM* 780α. *WSM* records this coin in the Proche Coll. Aleppo, from the same die pair as the following coin.
22. A2 P16 15.72 Paris, BnF K 1826. Babelon 19. Houghton and Lorber (2002): pl. 7, 117.7b; *WSM* 780β, pl. V, 17.
23. A2 P17 17.00 *CNG eAuction* 153 (2006), 60; Commerce ("Seleucus I") Hoard, 2005, *CH* 10.265 no. 1584. A2 with advanced wear.

**Table 1.** Striking order from die A2.

<b>Die use</b>	ΦΙΛΙΠΠΟΥ	ΣΕΛΕΥΚΟΥ
<b>Earliest</b>	- SC 118: nos. 6-8	SC 117.7a: nos. 18-19 -
<i>Retouching of die</i>		
<b>Intermediate 1</b>	SC 118: nos. 9-13	-
<i>Retouching of die</i>		
<b>Intermediate 2</b>	-	SC 117.7b: nos. 20-21
<b>Latest</b>	- SC 118: nos. 14-17	SC 117.7b: nos. 22-23

## Discussion

SC 118 was struck from two obverse dies and at least thirteen reverse dies. The second of these obverse dies (A2) was also used to strike SC 117.7 for which it was paired to at least four reverse dies. SC 117.7 consists of two variants (designated a and b) differentiated by a secondary mint control beneath the throne. Prior to this study, the die link between SC 118 and SC 117.7 was only identified for SC 117.7b, for which it was concluded the linking die was in a more worn state.<sup>7</sup> A key outcome of the die study is the observation that A2 in its earliest unworn state was also used to strike SC 117.7a.

Die A2 possesses a handsome rendering of Herakles in high relief. Although the style of this die is atypical of the majority of Alexander type obverse dies at Seleukeia on Tigris, it still falls within a diverse range of obverse styles observed in the coinage of the mint. In contrast, die A1 is in a more florid style that is a characteristic of the majority of the obverse dies used to strike the early Seleukid tetradrachm issues at the mint. The reverse dies of SC 118 and 117.7 are of a uniform style, indistinguishable from the balance of contemporary issues from the mint. Zeus is seated on a high-backed throne with turned legs braced by a single horizontal strut, although this element disappears on the last of SC 117.7, possibly to accommodate the mint mark placed beneath the throne. The right leg of Zeus is drawn back behind the left. With two exceptions (P7 and P16) his feet rest on a footstool, at times faintly delineated. Notably the loose, rolled end of the himation worn

<sup>7</sup> Houghton and Lorber (2002): 53-54.

by Zeus falls prominently below the seat of the throne, a feature of all the reverse dies of the Alexandrine type from the mint. There is nothing in the style of either the obverse, or reverse iconography of SC 118 to contradict its attribution to Seleukeia on Tigris.

<b>Die state</b>	<b>SC 118</b> ΦΙΛΙΠΠΟΥ	<b>SC 117.7</b> ΣΕΛΕΥΚΟΥ
<b>Earliest</b>	None known	 18
<b>Early</b>	 6	None known
<i>Retouching of die</i>		
<b>Intermediate (1)</b>	 12	None known.
<i>Retouching of die</i>		
<b>Intermediate (2)</b>	None known.	 20
<b>Latest</b>	 16	 23

Figure 1. Obverse die A2: progression of wear.

During its working life, obverse die A2 underwent at least two episodes of retouching, primarily burnishing of the flat fields, to remove developing die breaks before the face of Herakles and on his neck (Table 1 and Figure 1). Early in the life of the die two breaks emerged in the flat field extending from the forehead of Herakles, another before his lips, and another on the leading edge of his neck. These were removed in the first burnishing and retouching of the die, shortly after which another die break developed, extending from the upper lip of Herakles to beyond the tip of his nose. A second episode of die retouching incompletely removed this break, after which a more extensive pattern of die breaks developed before the face and on the neck of Herakles. These radiated from the outline of the face towards the border of the die (Figure 1, 16-23), while the pre-existing breaks on the neck became increasingly prominent, to the point where much of the detail of the neck and the tie of the lionskin is lost on the final strikes from the die (Figure 2). These observations define stages in the life of the die from earliest to latest (Table 1 and Figure 1) and allow the sequence of die use to be established between those coins struck in the name of Phillip and those bearing the name of Seleukos.

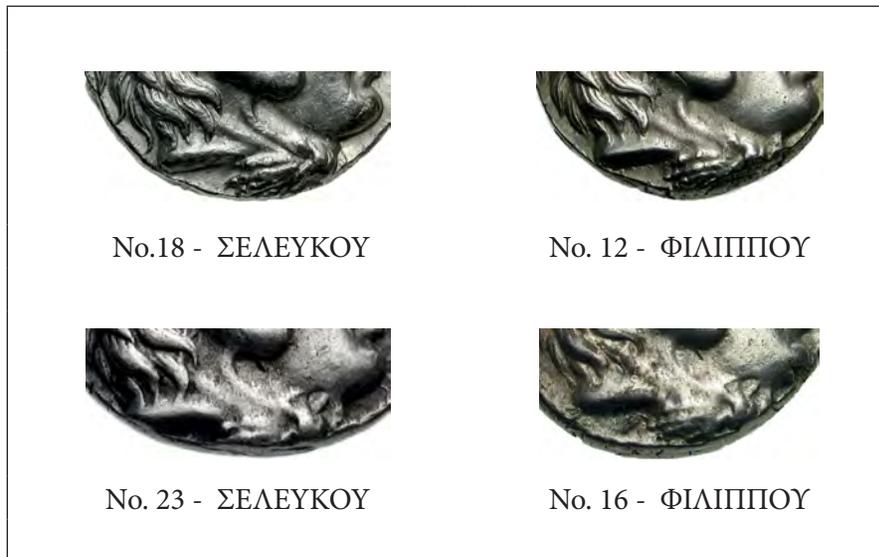


Figure 2. Progression of die wear on neck.



Figure 3. Progression in die wear on the mane of the lion skin headdress.

In its earliest state die A2 shows fine detail in the termination of the trailing ends of the tufts of hair of the mane (Figure 3, no. 18). Small turn-ups of the ends of the tufts are directed outwards towards the dotted border of the die. This fine detail was erased in the resurfacing, or burnishing of the die face, so that it is absent on later strikes (Figure 3, nos. 12-23). This detail is a critical differentiator that distinguishes the earliest strikes from those struck later from the retouched die, which for a brief period had a smooth field before the face of Herakles, after which the breaks before the face redeveloped. The differentiation of the earliest from the later strikes is also assisted by the fact that early in the life of the die a small die break started below the lower jaw of the lionskin behind Herakles' ear, and progressively deepened across the leading tufts of the mane (Figure 3). This break was not addressed in the resurfacing of the die face and continued to develop. This assists the differentiation of coins struck in the early and intermediate stages of die life.

The high relief of the engraving on die A2 contributes towards a sculptural quality on strikes from the die. So high is the relief that all of the examples struck from A2 exhibit incomplete, or flat striking on the highest points of the design, which occurred along the locks of hair above the forehead of Herakles. As a result, the locks of hair are never fully rendered, even on the strongest strikes. This effect is most pronounced on the coins struck during intermediate stage of die life, at which point a prominent die break developed on the flat field before the mouth, extending to beyond the tip of the nose. This suggests the possibility that the mint workers, aware of the developing die break, employed lighter than usual striking force in the hope of limiting the progression of

the die break and to extend die life. Because of the high relief engraving, a higher than usual striking force would have been required to drive the metal into the deepest points of the die, those of highest relief on the strike. This leads to the inference that the very high relief image on the die contributed towards the frequent and rapid development of breaks on the flat fields of the die face, which would have borne the brunt of striking load. Hence, the need for frequent retouching of the die face in an effort to extend the die's working life. The repeated efforts to salvage the die are consistent with a short duration mintage in a resource constrained environment.

The retouching of the die and subsequent development of new die breaks permits precise sequencing of the strikes from die A2, categorised into early, intermediate, and late based on the retouching of the die and the progression of die wear (Figure 1 and Table 1). In the corpus of the coinage, it is established unequivocally that die A2 was first used to strike SC 117.7a, shortly after which it was used to strike the first examples of SC 118 in the catalogue. This relative timing is evidenced by the development on SC 118 of two die breaks in the flat field extending from forehead of Herakles (Figure 1, no. 6). These breaks apparently prompted the first resurfacing of the die defining the start of the intermediate stage of die use in which prior to a second episode of retouching of the die, only examples of SC 118 are identified in the corpus. Intermediate stage strikes of SC 117.7b follow the second retouching of the die evidenced by the partial removal and subsequent redevelopment of a die break extending from the upper lip of Herakles to the tip of his nose as well as the progression of the previously noted die break and die wear in the mane of the lion skin headdress (Figure 1, no. 20). The late stage of die use is characterised by advanced die wear including a multiplicity of die breaks in the field before the face of Herakles, on his neck and the knot of the lion skin headdress. In this advanced state of wear the die was used to strike both SC 118 and SC 117.7b, with the latter apparently preceding the former based on the progression of die wear (Figure 1, nos. 16-23). In its most worn state A2 struck the last coins of SC 118 in the catalogue. The parallel progression of obverse die wear on both issues establishes conclusively that SC 118, struck in the name of Philip III, was a posthumous issue, an exact contemporary of SC 117.7 struck in the name of Seleukos. This confirms that SC 118 was struck from dies that were purpose cut for the issue about 13 years after the death of Philip III.<sup>8</sup> It indicates a deliberate intent behind the issue of this posthumous Philip III emission and its die linked counterpart in the name of Seleukos, rather than the latter arising from the random re-use of an old die dating to the lifetime of Philip III.

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<sup>8</sup> A posthumous origin for SC 118 is further suggested by the weight of the coins. The sample has a mean weight of 16.91 grams accompanied by median and modal weights of 16.96 grams in a weight range of 16.39-17.16 grams. Albeit based on a small sample, it appears that the coinage was weight adjusted to around 17.00 grams, a reduced Attic weight standard, somewhat lighter than the Attic weight standard of 17.20 grams, which prevailed during the era of Philip III.

The other obverse die (A1) from which SC 118 was struck shows little wear across the few known examples (Plate 1, 1-4). The five reverse dies paired to this die are in an identical style to those paired to A2, all probably cut by the same die engraver. Obverse die A1 is in the style that is most frequently encountered on the other issues in the name of Seleukos (SC 117.1-6). There is no doubt that A1, and the associated reverse dies were cut at the same time as A2. However, the word ΦΙΛΙΠΠΙΟΥ engraved on the first reverse die paired to A1 is in much smaller letters than found on subsequent reverse dies. It is placed high in the outer right field of the coin, rather than extending the length of the right field. There is a tentativeness in its sizing and placement on the die, as if this was the first time the engraver had cut the word on a die. For this reason, die A1, to which this reverse was paired, has been placed ahead of A2 in the sequence. Within the limitations of our small sample, it is possible that A1 was also used to strike coinage in the name of Seleukos, although to date no such specimens have been identified. Alternatively, die A1 might have broken before it could be put to use to strike coinage in the name of Seleukos. The episodic retouching of A2 indicates that some effort was made to extend the working life of this die during the striking of SC 118 and SC 117.7. This might have been necessitated by the premature failure of A1 in a resource-constrained environment during the commissioning of the mint, for as is argued below, these two issues appear to have been the first from the mint, possibly struck during a period of commissioning before the mint was fully resourced.<sup>9</sup>

### Interpretation

The confirmation that SC 118 was an intentional posthumous issue, struck from purpose cut dies, refutes the previous hypothesis that the mintage of SC 117.7b was the result of the inexplicable rehabilitation of an old obverse die from the era of Philip III. A deliberate posthumous Phillip III emission die linked to coinage in the name of Seleukos finds a direct parallel in the die linked issues in the name of Alexander (Series II; SC 67), Philip (Series IV; SC 68), and Seleukos (Series IV; SC 69 and SC 50) that were struck at Uncertain Mint 6A in Babylonia.<sup>10</sup> Prior to its transformation into a military campaign mint, Uncertain Mint 6A was probably located at the strategic site of Opis on the east bank of the river Tigris, about 19 km northeast of the site of what was to become Seleukeia on Tigris on the west bank.<sup>11</sup> Here the issues in the name of the three kings are linked by a single obverse die that was used to strike the first coinage to bear the name of

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9 Taylor (2022): indications are present in the suite of mint controls employed at Seleukeia on Tigris, which suggest that manpower was progressively mobilised from into the new mint as the other Babylonian mints (Babylon I and II, Uncertain Mint 6A) ceased operation.

10 Taylor (2015).

11 Taylor (2015): 42. The site of Opis is now identified with the mound of Tall al-Mujailāt about 32 km southeast of Baghdad (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opis> accessed on 12 January 2020).

Seleukos.<sup>12</sup> This has been interpreted to be the result of ritual die usage, perhaps implying the legitimacy of Seleukos I as the successor to Alexander III and Philip III.<sup>13</sup> It was directly associated with the formal acclamation of Seleukos as king, and the initiation of coinage bearing his own name in *c.* 304/3 BC. The interpretation of a ritually symbolic component in the coinage is strengthened by the recent identification of a tetradrachm struck at Uncertain Mint 6A from a lifetime Philip III die pair, recut with the name of Seleukos over that of Philip, to which had been added the anchor insignia of Seleukos.<sup>14</sup>

It is important to note that a ritual practice is not the same as a propaganda statement on coinage. Whereas the latter was meant to be seen and understood on coins in circulation, ritual practice is limited to and appreciated by only a single individual, or small group, or exercised in an organizational structure (i.e. a mint). A ritual does not constitute a general-purpose statement, in this case of legitimacy. Rather, the die linkage of coins struck in the name of a succession of kings has the character of a favourable omen, one that bodes well for the future, and sustains the belief of the practitioner in his legitimacy to succeed to the kingship. Against this backdrop, it is not unreasonable to infer that the ritual striking of a die linked coinage in the name of Philip and Seleukos was ordained by Seleukos himself and given effect through his mint administration in Babylonia. Additional to this consideration is the fact that numismatic evidence in the form of die counts (Figure 4) suggests that Philip III held a greater significance for Seleukos, his army and perhaps the populace in Babylonia (and Susiana) than was case elsewhere in Macedonian empire.<sup>15</sup> In this respect, the ritual striking of a small volume of coinage by Seleukos in the name of Philip simultaneously with that struck in his own name may have served to play into the ritual beliefs of the administrative and/or religious elites in Babylonia.<sup>16</sup> In effect, it posthumously extended a uniquely Babylonian pattern of issuance of coinage in the name of Philip III (Figure 4).

Underlying ritual is the belief on the part of the practitioner(s) on the efficacy of the ritual. This distinguishes ritual practice from the myth making and propaganda of Seleukos, which was directed to his subjects as a validation of his legitimacy. The myth making about the role of the anchor in the ascent to power of Seleukos is a case in point, one that saw his anchor insignia/seal reinstated on coinage struck in his own name after in the years following his victory at Ipsos, after which it continued as a

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12 Taylor (2015): 48-51 and fig.1: obverse die (A50) linked Series II (Alexander), IV (Philip) and V (Seleukos).

13 Taylor (2015): 50-51 and 73-74.

14 Taylor (2018): 39-46.

15 Taylor (2019a), 48-49 and fig. 1; Taylor (2015): 65-66, table 9 and fig. 3.

16 The die linkage and thus an appreciation of its ritual significance, is unlikely to have been noticed in coinage circulation. Perhaps 20,000 coins would have been struck from die A2, a negligible volume in the context of the total mintage of tetradrachms from the Babylonian mints in the period 311-300 BC.

dynastic symbol.<sup>17</sup> This occurred in an era in which political and military power were extremely unstable and competition between the Successors was especially severe. All these new kingdoms badly needed special sanctions to lend an aura of legitimacy to their otherwise *de facto* power. Of course, the prime key to success of any of these dynasts was his personality, abilities, and achievements, but a vital secondary key would frequently be a combination of charismatic and non-charismatic sanctions. Such sanctions, therefore, had the effect of transcending the life-span of the individual upon whom they were originally conferred.<sup>18</sup> The designs on Hellenistic coinage reflected this reality. They were intended 'to publicise a ruler's actual achievements or omens, legends, and prophecies concerning him in order to enhance his own personal prestige and to provide added reasons for continued loyalty to future members of the dynasty he hoped to establish.'<sup>19</sup> Unlike ritual, numismatic propaganda served a wider purpose and played to a much larger audience than ritual.

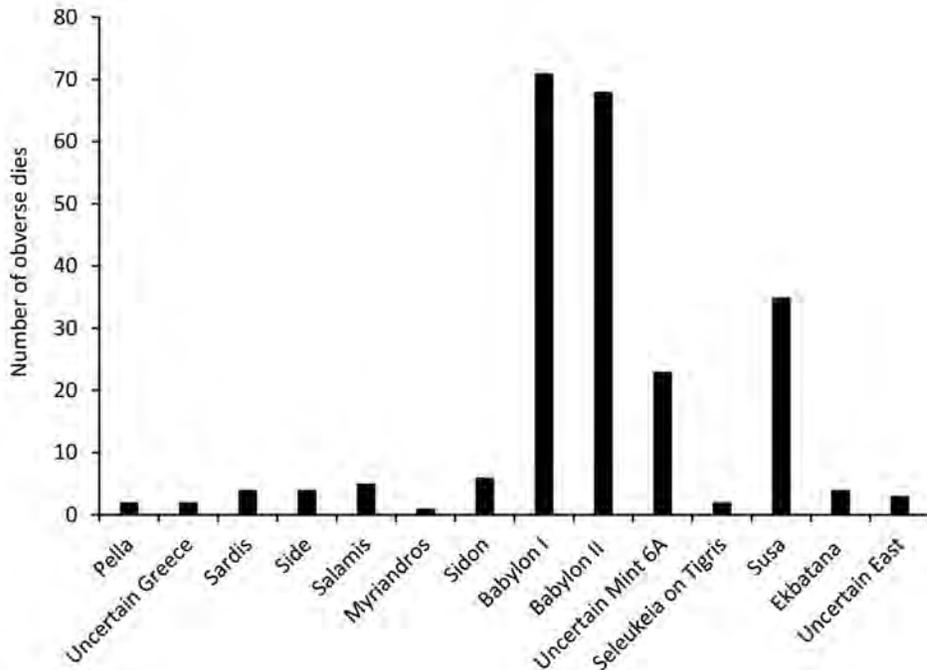


Figure 4. Tetradrachms in the name of Philip III: number of dies.

The presence of the pentagram on the reverse of SC 118 lends credence to the explanation. This symbol had appeared previously on the coinage of Babylon, struck in the name of Alexander (Price 3658), and on one emission of the lion stater coinage

17 Taylor (2019b): 78-80; Taylor (2015).

18 Hadley (1974): 64.

19 Hadley (1974): 51.

issued from the satrapal workshop of Babylon (Babylon II).<sup>20</sup> Later, the pentagram symbol, accompanied by Greek letter mint controls, appeared on one of the elephant chariot issues from Seleukeia on Tigris (SC 130.36). The pentagram held astronomical and religious significance in Babylonia where the points of the pentagram were associated with the five known planets as well as the major gods in the Babylonian pantheon; Jupiter (Marduk), Venus (Ishtar), Saturn (Ninib), Mercury (Nabû) and Mars (Nergal).<sup>21</sup> A relatively infrequent astronomical alignment of a combination of the planets and moon in the western sky after sunset would define a pentagram, which was considered an omen, a propitious time for a new endeavour such as the foundation, or inauguration of a new capital city. Modern day astronomical calculations indicate that two such auspicious alignments occurred close together on 8 and 11 April 301, leading Iossif to argue that April 301 might have been the date of either the foundation or the inauguration of Seleukeia of Tigris.<sup>22</sup> However, this date is most unlikely as Seleukos was with his army, having emerged from a winter encampment in eastern Asia Minor, then to advance west towards Phrygia for the decisive encounter with Antigonos at Ipsos in the spring of 301 BC.<sup>23</sup> The ancient sources record that Seleukos was present with his army at the site of Seleukeia on Tigris when the first soil was turned for the construction of his new capital, clearly ruling out April 301 BC for the foundation date.<sup>24</sup>

Putting aside the matter of the precise date of the inauguration of Seleukeia on Tigris and the relevance of the pentagram to this calculation, it is certain that the pentagram held symbolic meaning in Babylonian culture and religion, so that its presence in the iconography of a posthumous Philip III issue, an inaugural emission from the mint at Seleukeia on Tigris, probably held meaning beyond that of a simple mint mark. Reinforcing this interpretation is the fact that symbols are otherwise absent from the Alexandrine issues of Seleukeia on Tigris. Although conjectural, it may have symbolised the presence of the Babylonian pantheon of gods in the reverse iconography, complementing that of the Greek god Zeus. Alternatively, but less likely given the intentional nature of the posthumous Phillip III issue, the pentagram might simply be an expression of a degree of continuity in the practice and application of mint controls during the transition of mint operations from the Babylon mint, where it was formerly used, to Seleukeia on Tigris.

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20 Nicolet-Pierre (1999): 285-305: type 5.

21 Iossif (2012): footnote 42.

22 Iossif (2012): footnote 42.

23 Grainger (2014): 75-81.

24 App. Syr. 9.58. Grainger (1990):101-102 for an account of events surrounding the new foundation, including the deliberately erroneous astronomically based predictions of the priests of the Esagila (a temple dedicated to Marduk the protector god of Babylon) in an attempt to defer the foundation of Seleukeia on Tigris to a less auspicious time.

## Chronology

Indirect evidence for the primary conclusion of the die analysis, that of the posthumous mintage of SC 118, is found in the hoard record of the coinage (Table 2).

**Table 2:** Hoard record.

<b>Hoard</b>	<b>Burial BC</b>	<b>SC 118</b>	<b>SC 117.7b</b>
Phoenicia 1997, <i>CH</i> 9.483	c. 290-285	1	-
Failaka 1984, <i>CH</i> 8.256	c. 285	1	-
Armenak 1927, <i>IGCH</i> 1423	c. 280	1	-
'Seleucus I' 2005, <i>CH</i> 10.265	c. 281-279	6	1

All the recorded finds of SC 118 are late. They date to the second decade of the third century BC, coincident with the earliest dates of finds of other Alexandrine issues from Seleukeia on Tigris, including SC 117.7b (Commerce ('Seleucus I') Hoard, 2005, *CH* 10.265 no. 1584). In contrast, the lifetime issues in the name of Philip III (Series I; SC Ad39) that were struck at nearby Uncertain Mint 6A (Opis) were found in eight hoards that closed in the decade prior to 300 BC, while the posthumous issue (Series IV; SC 68) from the mint was only present in the Ankara hoard (*IGCH* 1399) that closed around 290 BC.<sup>25</sup> Notably, the largest number of tetradrachms of type SC 118 was found in the Commerce ('Seleucus I') Hoard 2005 (*CH* 10.265), accompanied by the sole known hoard find of SC 117.7b. This hoard is interpreted to have been part of the campaign treasury of Seleukos.<sup>26</sup> The presence of a number of examples of SC 118 (and 117.7b) in this hoard may reflect the entry of part of the Philip III emission into the royal treasury, with some of these coins transferred two decades later into the campaign treasury that accompanied the deployment of the army to confront Lysimachos at Korupedion in 281 BC.

Beyond the hoard data, the existence of posthumous Philip III and die linked Seleukos issues at two adjacent Babylonian mints closely ties together the chronology of these emissions from Uncertain Mint 6A (Opis) and Seleukeia on Tigris. It links them to the moment that Seleukos adopted the royal title and commenced issuing coinage in his own name commencing c. 304/3 BC.<sup>27</sup> Based on historical and numismatic considerations, it is probable that Seleukos ordered the start of construction of Seleukeia on Tigris in 308/7 BC, prior to his departure on a four-year eastern *anabasis* that saw him assert his control over the Upper Satrapies.<sup>28</sup> This followed his successful prosecution of the protracted Babylonian War, which saw Antigonid forces expelled from the province in 309/8 BC. Around 304/3 BC, Seleukos returned to Babylonia to be formally acclaimed

<sup>25</sup> Taylor (2015): table 8.

<sup>26</sup> Nelson (2010): 76-78.

<sup>27</sup> Taylor (2015): 50-51, table 2 and figure 1.

<sup>28</sup> Iossif and Lorber (2007): 345-363; Grainger (2014): 61.

king in the Macedonian tradition by the assembled army at Opis. This marked the start of coinage struck in his own name. Around this time, it is probable that that he inaugurated his newly completed capital on the opposite bank of the Tigris, and certainly would have done so before his departure in 302 BC on the military campaign into Asia Minor that culminated in the Battle of Ipsos in the spring of 301 BC.<sup>29</sup> This chronology is updated by three years relative to that posited in *Seleucid Coins*, which proposed that the mint at Seleukeia on Tigris opened ‘around 300 or shortly after’.<sup>30</sup>

With the inferred start of the Seleukeia on Tigris sequence defined by the die linked issues of SC 118 and 117.7 it is possible to redefine the early sequence and relative chronology of the Alexandrine issues from the Seleukeia on Tigris using a combination of the mint control links between types, plus a multiplicity of previously identified die links that occur in the issues bearing the names of Alexander, Seleukos and Antiochos (Table 3).<sup>31</sup> The absolute chronology of these emissions is constrained by three critical dates: the formal acclamation of Seleukos’ kingship in c. 304/3 BC; the introduction of the Zeus Nikephoros reverse following Seleukos’ victory over Antigonos at the Battle of Ipsos in the spring of 301 BC; and the co-regency with Antiochos I commencing in 295/4 BC. The result is a tightly linked sequence of issues, presented schematically in Table 3, with the component issues updated by 3-5 years relative to that proposed in *Seleucid Coins*. The tight clustering of die and control linked issues suggests that the mint episodically struck a range of Alexandrine issues, frequently in the name of two kings simultaneously, continuing a pattern initiated with SC 118 and SC 117.7.

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29 Taylor (2015): 69-75.

30 Houghton and Lorber (2002): 52.

31 Waggoner (1969): 21-30; Houghton and Lorber (2002): 52-55.



Plate 1

SC 118



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10



11



12



Plate 2

SC 118



13



14



15



16



SC 117.7



18



19



20



22



23



## Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Arthur Houghton who encouraged me to undertake an analysis of the Philip III issue attributed to Seleukeia on Tigris and provided me with images of the examples from his collection. He kindly consented to their reproduction in this paper. Arthur's foresight in collecting as many examples as possible of the coinage, in the belief that it would unlock the mystery of the Philip III issue, proved prescient. Oliver Hoover kindly provided a copy of his unpublished Addenda Plates to CSE II containing a previously unpublished coin of type SC 117.7b from the Houghton collection. I thank the anonymous peer reviewers for their thought-provoking comments and suggestions. These resulted in a more comprehensive essay, including a thorough exposition of that which I observed on die A2, and my elucidation of the essence of ritual that I have inferred from the pattern of die use in the various Babylonian mints of Seleukos. The images of coins from the collections of the American Numismatic Society, the British Museum and the Bibliothèque nationale de France were sourced from *Seleucid Coins Online* and are reproduced under the terms of the Open Database Licence (ODbL) v1.0 and the Creative Commons Licence v.4.0.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> <http://numismatics.org/sco/> accessed 3 January 2020.

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